(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government plan to bring a new revised tariff regime; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and by when the new/revised tariff would come into force?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN) : (a) Yes, Sir. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, *vide* the 24th Amendment to the Telecom Tariff Order (TTO), 1999, had announced new tariffs (notified on 24.01.2003),. which were to come into effect from 1st April, 2003. These have now been deferred to 1st May. 2003.

(b) Within the ceilings given by TRAI, the service providers were expected to give alternative tariff packages, which were to be shown to TRAI and the consumers informed of the choices available to them well in advance of their implementation. The various alternative tariff plans were received from the service providers by TRAI only between the 10th and 24th of March, 2003, and required detailed consideration of TRAI. The Service Providers also had to file tariff plans in consonance with the Interconnection Usage Charges (IUC) regime before the TRAI in line with the provisions of the 24th Amendment to the TTO. Since the proposals from the service providers came up to 24.03.2003, the TRAI decided to defer implementation of new tariffs to 1.5.2003, giving both the service providers and consumers further time.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. As per the TRAI Act of 1997, as amended in 2000, the power of fixing tariffs for telecom services is mandated to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India only. The Government no longer fixes tariff for telecom services in the country. The tariffs of the service providers will come into effect from 1.5.2003.

Telecom Tariff Hike

3601. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has refused to rollback the telecom tariff hike announced a couple of months back;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the action, if any, proposed to be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN) : (a) The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), vide the 24th Amendment to the Telecom Tariff Order (TTO) 1999, issued on 24.01.2003, revised the prevalent tariffs of telecommunication services. The implementation of the tariff was postponed to 1st May, 2003 *vide* the 26th Amendment to the Telecom Tariff Order (TTO) dated 27th March, 2003. The tariff announced by TRAI is Standard Tariff Package, and service providers can and will offer alternative tariff packages to subscribers, depending upon consumer preferences.

(b) As per TRAI Act, 1997, as amended in 2000, the power of fixing tariff for telecom services is mandated to the TRAI alone. The Government no longer fixes tariffs for telecom services in the country. TRAI is now the only Authority for exercising this power.

(c) Does not arise in view of (b) above.

Basic telephone services by Private Companies

†3602. SHRI LAJPAT RAI :
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN' :
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had issued licenses on licence fee basis to certain companies in private sector to operate basic telephone services in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that they had been told, at the time of issuing licences to instal village public telephones in the villages of the said States;

(c) if so, the number of VPTs required to be installed by each company;

(d) the number of VPTs installed by December, 2002; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.